

On some Archæological remains in the District of Rājshāhī.—By

MAULAVI ABDUL WALI.

[Read June, 1903.]

A few months ago I was so fortunate as to find in the Record-room of the Magistrate of Rājshāhī a highly interesting report on the archæological buildings of the district. Mr. J. S. Carstairs, late Magistrate and Collector of Rājshāhī, submitted in his letter, No. 86, dated the ^{15th}/_{22nd} April, 1872, an account of the Jāmi' Masjids¹ at Bagha and Kusamba to the Commissioner of the Division. This report, with its rough sketches (a copy of which I took),² is of the highest value at the present moment, as both the buildings have fallen into utter ruins. My acknowledgments are due to Saiyid Tafazzul Husain Ṣāhib, Sirrishtadār to the Magistrate of Rājshāhī, for his finding out the report for me, and for preserving it so long from being destroyed as a waste-paper.

The paper is submitted as its author had penned it. I have only modified the spellings of certain Oriental words according to the system of transliteration adopted by the Society, and put them in angular brackets. I have divided the paper into two parts, and put Mr. Carstairs's report in double inverted commas, adding a few notes of mine below each part.

The Arabic *texts* of the original inscriptions have been procured and carefully deciphered and translated.

“I have the honor to submit a report on the Archæological Buildings in this district visited by me during the year 1871-72.

“The first to be mentioned is the old Bagha Mosque. It is supposed to have been built in the year 930 of the Hegira [Hijra]. It

¹ The word Jāmi, (جامع) does not occur in the inscription of the Kusamba Masjid. It was not constructed by a King, but during the reign of a King, by a nobleman.

² These sketches were too rough for publication and have been omitted.—Ed.

has 10 domes visible outside over the roof and supported inside by vaulted arches running lengthways and transverse between the walls and the four stone pillars which stand along the centre of the interior.

“The marginal sketch shows the style of the arches and the character of the central pillars. In the west wall there are three ornamental recesses intended for the leaders of devotion, the central recess being for the Imām. The building is 54 feet long by 45 feet broad: the walls of brick are 7 feet in thickness; at a distance the building has an unsightly appearance, looks in fact like a queer-shaped barn of red brick. The following rough sketch may convey an idea of its form, but I have not attempted to show the fillagree ornamentation of greatly varying patterns and details with which the walls on all four sides are covered and which are carved apparently out of the brick. Some of these patterns are extremely elegant. I venture to reproduce a few of the easiest on the margin and also a specimen of the favourite device which, with innumerable variations of details is repeated again and again all round. Over the central door is an inscription of which I annex a copy. It runs to the following effect:—

“May God pour down his blessings on the Prophet who said:—The man that maketh a seat for God on earth shall find in turn a seat made ready for him in Heaven by God. The founder of this Jumah Masjid was a great and benevolent Emperor who was also the son of an Emperor. He was victorious in all worldly and religious affairs:—Abool Muzaffar Nuzrut Shah [Abu-l-Muzaffar Nuṣrat Shāh], son of Shah Sultan Hosseinul Hosseinee [Sultān Ḥusain-al-Ḥusainī]. May God keep him and his country and his empire for ever in safety. The year 930 (of the Hegira).”

“There is great difficulty about ascertaining the real facts connected with the erection of this building and the acquisition of the surrounding lakhraj property by the Khondakors of Bagha. In the year 1815 the Board of Revenue directed the then Collector to make enquiries about the Bagha Estate, but it was found that no accurate information was forthcoming, and that only incorrect information was furnished by the Khondakors who were afraid of measures being taken for the resumption of their lakhraj.

“The following is the popular story about Bagha. An emperor of Gaur on his way to Dacca encamped near Bagha. As fire was wanted men were sent out to find a house. Coming to a jungle from which smoke was ascending, they found a fakeer who, though fires were burning and tigers were roaring round him, went on quietly with his prayers to God. The men seized up some fire and rushed back with it to the camp where they told the Emperor what they had seen. The

Emperor, filled with curiosity, went forth and visited the fakeer and found him as has been reported. Then the Emperor waited on the fakeer whose name was Shah' Mahamed Doolla [*Shāh Muḥammad Daula*] and besought him saying, "O man of God, shall thy servant advance to Dacca or wait here." Then the Fakeer answered and said, "Wait thou here one day." So the Emperor waited. And it came to pass the very same day that there came messengers to him from Dacca saying, "Behold, the fighting is over, and the victory is thine." Then was the Emperor greatly pleased and said, "Behold here is a great man," and he offered unto him many lands, free of rent, but these the man of God would not accept, saying, "Nay, my lord; but thy servant cannot hear of this thing. For he that once hath turned his back upon the world, how shall he not be averse to the vanities thereof. But let thy favour be showed unto thy servant's son." And the name of his son was Hazrut Moulana Danesh-Mund [*Hazrat Maulānā Dānishmand*]. To him, therefore, did the Emperor give a royal grant of two and twenty mauzahs of rent-free land. This Maulana Danesh-Mund was the father of Abdool Waheb who, according to another account, was the person to whom the Emperor of Delhi, Shah Jahan on a tour in this district awarded the rent-free tenures round the musjid, as a reward for his great learning, in the year 1033. It is said that in the Sunnud [*Sanad*] no other provision was made and that the lands were given solely for the support of himself and his descendants, that the descendants considering that the Lakhraj, as assigned, might be liable to resumption, altered the grant, so as to make it appear that half was to be devoted to religious services, and that it was to be enjoyed only by men of learning and religion in the family. Abdool Wahib's [*'Abdu-l-Wahhāb's*] son Mahamed Ruffik [*Muḥammad Rafiq*] was the first Roish [*Rais*] or Sebait of the musjid.

"At the north end of the building are 3 tombs, said to be those of the Darogahs who took part in building the masjid, and in the neighbourhood are cemeteries in which all the members of the Bagha family when they die are buried, but there is nothing architecturally striking about their tombs.

"The chief representatives of the family are now minors and their properties are under the management of the Civil Court. Near the mosque is a large tank in a very dirty state and over-grown all over with weeds."

NOTES.

Long before the present territorial aristocracy of the District of Rājshāhī—the Thākūrs of Putiyā, the Rājās of Nātor and Dighā-patiyā—had acquired their Zamindārīs, the part of the country in

which the Jāmi' Masjid and the big tank of Bagha are situated formed a part of the Pargana Lashkarpur, which again according to the *Āin-i-Akbarī* was included within the administrative jurisdiction of Sarkār Bārbakābād. The Qasba-i-Bāghā is situated in Bilmāriā (or Lālpur) Police Circle, under Nātōr Sub-division, to the South-east of Rampur-Boalia. According to the Statistical Accounts of Rājshāhī, the Muḥammadan rent-free tenures and *aimās* are most numerous in the police thānās of Bilmāriā and Nātōr.

The following is the Arabic text of the inscription in beautiful Tughrā Character—¹

(1) قول النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من بنى مسجد الله في الدنيا بنى الله له بيت في الجنة بنى هذا المسجد الجامع السلطان (2) المعظم والمكرم السلطان بن السلطان ناصر الدنيا والدين ابوالمظفر (3) نصرنشاه السلطان ابن حسين شاه السلطان الحسيني خلد الله ملكه وسلطانه في سنة ثلاثين وتسعمائة *

TRANSLATION.

The Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, says—"He who maketh a Masjid for God on earth, will have an abode made for him by God in Heaven like it." This Cathedral mosque was built by the exalted and benevolent Sultan, the Sultan son of a Sultan, Nāṣiru-d-Dunyā wad-Dīn, Abu-l-Muzaffar Nuṣrat Shāh the Sultān, son of Sultān Ḥusain Shah-al-Ḥusainī,—May God perpetuate his kingdom and rule,—in the year 930 (A.H).

Sultān 'Alā'uddīn Ḥusain Shāh, who was a contemporary of the Delhi Emperor Sikandar Lōdī, was succeeded by his son Abu-l-Muzaffar Nāṣiru-d-Dīn Nuṣrat Shāh. The latter reigned from A.D. 1518 to 1532, corresponding to A.H. 925 to 939. During the reign of this monarch, in the year 930 A.H. or 1523-4 A.D., the beautiful Masjid at Bagha was constructed and a tank excavated. Not far from Bagha, at Makhdūmpur, lived at that time 'Alā Bakhsh Barkhurdār Lashkarī: the ruins of his house can still be seen. He was at once a great man and a Royal Jāgirdār of Pargana Lashkarpur, which yielded an annual income of Rupees three lakhs and sixty thousand. This Jāgīr he had received from Ḥusain Shāh.

About this time came from Baghdād Maulānā Shāh Mu'azzam Dāniṣmand,² who is known by his more familiar name Shāh Daula. He married Zibu-n-Nisā, daughter of the Jāgirdār. Their son was

¹ The inscription is in 3 lines, 24 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches long, and 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches broad.

² The Persian titles 'Dāniṣmand' and 'Shāh Daula,' clearly show that the Maulana did not come direct from Baghdād, where only Arabic titles are used.

that renowned scholar and man, Maulānā Ḥamīd Dānishmand, whose life and fame cast an additional lustre on the family. His son Shāh ‘Abdu-l-Wahhāb got in 1033 A.H. from Shāh Jahān, son of Emperor Jahāngīr, *forty-two* mauzas, with an annual rent of Rs. 8,000 as a *Jāgīr*. This *Jāgīr*, was given by that prince, while as it appears from history, he held temporarily the Dictatorship of Bengal, having rebelled against his father. In 1032 A.H. (1662 A.D.) a bloody battle was fought between the Shūbahdār Ibrāhīm Khān Fath-Jang and that Prince, in which the faithful Shūbahdār died fighting. This grant, so it appears, was subsequently ratified and reaffirmed by Emperor Jahāngīr; thus the Bagha *Jāgīr* was not, as it is said, conferred by both of them under separate Sanads.

In the year 1047 A.H. (1637 A.D.) Shāh Muḥammad Rafīq, son of ‘Abdu-l-Wahhāb, made a *waqf* of the eight-annas share of the property, the remaining eight annas remaining with the sons of his brother, Nūru-l-‘Ārifīn. The Mutawallī of the Estate, who is styled *Ra’īs*, performs all the duties of his office, *e.g.*, the celebration of the ‘*Urs* looking after the Madrasah, the Masjid and the Musāfirīn (wayfarers) &c., &c. The first *Ra’īs* was Mu‘īnu-l-Islām, eldest son of Shāh Muḥammad Rafīq, the *donor*. The second and third *Ra’īs*es were respectively his son and grandson, Shamsu-l-Islām and Sharīfu-l-Islām. The fourth *Ra’īs* was Faṣīḥu-l-Islām, brother of Sharīfu-l-Islām. Faṣīḥu-l-Islām’s son, Faīzu-l-Islām, who was the fifth *Ra’īs*, died without leaving any male issue. He was, therefore, succeeded, by his son-in-law, Nūr ‘Ālam, as the sixth *Ra’īs*. Khundkār ‘Abdullāh, the son of the latter, was elevated to *gadi*, as the Seventh *Ra’īs*.

Shāh Muḥammad Rafīq’s second son, Badru-l-Islām, and grandson, Amīru-l-Islām, were not *Ra’īs*es, as Rafīq’s eldest son, and the latter’s descendants, succeeded one after another, till the time of the fifth *Ra’īs*, Faṣīḥu-l-Islām, who died leaving no male issue. As ‘Abdullāh, like his father, was not descended from the male line of the donor, and as also not qualified for the post of Mutawallī, Amīru-l-Islām’s son Musāfiru-l-Islām instituted in 1805 A.D. a suit in the Ṣadr Dīwānī ‘Adālat, Calcutta, to establish his rights as a Mutawallī. The case being decided in his favour, he was installed in 1806 as the eighth *Ra’īs*, when ‘Abdullāh had to retire. Musāfiru-l-Islām’s two sons, Muẓaffaru-l-Islām and ‘Azīzu-l-Islām succeeded one after the other as the ninth and tenth *Ra’īs*es. The latter having lost a grown-up son, declared as his successor to the Riyāsat his other son, Tanṣīqu-l-Islām, who succeeded him. The present or the twelfth *Ra’īs*, Amīru-l-Islām, is a brother of Tanṣīqu-l-Islām.

The family of the Bagha Khundkars has enjoyed till lately great

respect. It is said, that Shāh Daula was descended from the 'Abbāsī Khalifa, Hārūn-ar-Rashīd of Baghdād. Shāh Daula ran away from Baghdād, and married the daughter of 'Alā Bakhsh Barkurdār, Jāgirdār of Lashkarpūr or Putiyā. His family has been known as a *half* family, because according to the proverb "a man is but half a man till he gets a wife" he came to Bengal *alone* or without a wife.

The author of the *Riyāzu-s-Salāṭīn* states that Rājā Kans, among his other tyrannical acts, had killed Shaikh Badru-l-Islām 'Abbāsī, owing to the latter not showing sufficient respect to him. Khundkār Fazl-i-Rabbī in his "Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal," and in the "Taṣḍīqu-n-Nihād," endorses this account, and states that Shaikh Badru-l-Islām was a disciple of the saint Nūr Quṭb-i-'Ālam, and that Sultān Ibrāhīm Sharqī of Jaunpur came at the special request of the saint to punish Kans. As the founder of the Khundkār family of Bagha flourished during the reign of King Nuṣrat Shāh in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century A.D., and Rājā Kans reigned almost a century-and-a-half before that, either the fact stated is untrue, or the person said to be killed has not been identified.

The income of the big *āima* Estate has been variously estimated. Mr. Adam, in his Report on Education, states that its income, according to the Collector of Rājshāhī was Rs. 30,000. According to my information its income was over Rs. 18,000 per annum. As the estate is not well managed, its income must be of a fluctuating nature.

In the earthquake of 1897, the Jāmi' Masjid was severely damaged. Its walls on three sides are still standing: the front or Eastern wall and the roof have fallen. During the famine of 1897 A.D., the Government began re-excavating the big tank as a relief measure, but it was stopped as the rains set in, and has not since been resumed. It is to be regretted that this 'fine mosque, one of the few handsome ancient buildings in the District,' should be allowed to remain in this dilapidated state, while there be an endowment of land for the maintenance of the same and other charitable works.¹

A religious fair is held at Bagha to celebrate the 'Īd-i-Ramazān on the termination of the fastings.

PART II.—KUSAMBA.

"The next Building I have to mention is the mosque at Kusamba in Manda Thannah in the north of the District. It is of the same shape

¹ The mosque has been inspected by me on behalf of Government in October 1903, and its restoration has been sanctioned. All the domes have fallen, but the walls are still fairly intact, with the exception of a portion of the Eastern facade. In all details, the mosque is almost a duplicate of the famous Tantipara Masjid at

as that at Bagha, but smaller and built of solid stone instead of bricks. It has 6 domes and there are 2 pillars only along the centre of the interior. The arches are of the same shape as those in the Bagha mosque; there are nine arches lengthways and 8 arches transverse, including those cut into the side walls. At each end of the building there are 2 recess windows. On the east side are 3 doors. On the west side are 2 decorated recesses for the leaders of devotion, adorned with dark green stone into which ornamental devices, very elegant and chaste, have been carved. The mosque was roughly measured as 40 haths long by 30 haths broad, and the walls of stone are $4\frac{3}{4}$ haths in depth. On the outside of massive stone there is very little ornamentation. Over the middle doorway is an inscription of which I annex a copy to the following effect: "May God pour forth blessings on the Prophet who said, "The man that maketh a place for the worship of God on earth shall in turn be made happy by God in the day of judgment." The founder of this mosque was a powerful and benevolent Emperor, one who was victorious in worldly and religious affairs, namely Abool Muzaffar Bahadur [Abu-l-Muzaffar Bahādur], son of Sultan Mahamed Gazeer [Sultān Muḥammad Ghāzī]. May God keep him and his country and empire in safety. He was a mighty Emperor full of glory and had a large army. Constructed by Suleyman Ram in the year 903 of the Hegira¹."

"In the interior on the west side but to the north of the recesses are first a stone pulpit with stairs and next reaching to the north-west corner a stone *Dargāh* with stairs.

"Rough sketches of these and of one of the pillars are attempted below.

"The pillars are massive as shown on the margin. The roof is overgrown with heavy jungle which threatens in time to bring down the whole building. This would be a great pity as the building is the finest and oldest of its kind in the district. Close to the mosque is an immense tank of fine clear water: it looks quite like a lake and is said to extend over an area of 70 bighas. If proper care were taken of this property it would be a most interesting and picturesque neighbourhood, but it has fallen into the hands of a Hindu Mooktear [Mukhtār], who does not appear to find it worth his while to keep it in good order.

"The following is the popular tale about this mosque:—

"A zemindar, by name Chilman Mazumdar, who lived in Kalisaffa, Gaur, but the carvings of the latter exhibit greater skill and elegance. The question of compelling the Rais of Bagha to do the repairs at his own cost is at present under consideration.—T. BLOCH.

¹ See below for a correct transcript and translation of this inscription.

fell into arrears of rent, and for his debts was imprisoned at Moorshidabad by the Nawab. In the month of Aswin one night of the Durga Poojah he sang some pathetic songs so beautifully as to enchant one of the Nawab's Begums who was listening to his singing. She spoke about him next day to the Nawab, and he gave orders to the jailor to produce forthwith the man who had been singing in the Jail during the previous night. The jailor accordingly produced Chilman Mazumdar, who was informed that he was then and there to marry the Begum whom he had enchanted and also to turn Mahomedan. He declined at first and expostulated strongly, on which the Nawab sentenced him to death as the alternative. The Mazumdar, to save his life, consented and turned Musalman, took the name of Soleem Khan and was married to the Begum. Then the Begum urged to the Nawab that this husband of her had not the means to support her, on which the Nawab gave them in a *sanad* a lakhraj grant of Perganah Kaligaon, and authorized them to take from his Treasury as much wealth as they could load themselves with, in one prohar's time. So the Begum and her Khan went into the Treasury and carried off as much wealth as they could manage to stow away about their persons within the time allowed. They went to Kushamba near the Khan's old home and built themselves a fine house, which is now in utter ruins and quite inaccessible on account of the thick jungle. Then they erected first a smaller mosque which is also now inaccessible, and then the larger masjid under notice. Two tanks were excavated, and the Khan dedicated one to his *Gooroo Thakur* according to the Hindu Shastras, and the other is known by the name of the Shonadighee, after his wife the Begum, who was named Shona Beebee. Sona Bibee soon bore him a son, and the family occupied their property happily for many years. But in the time of Soleem's great-grandson, Rajah Baidyanath of Dinajpur made an inroad, looted the property, and took possession of Perganah Kaligaon. Subsequently the Perganah came into the hands of the British Government and was disposed of to several zemindars.

“The water of the large Dighee is said to be very clear. No jungle grows in it and from this fact, and also from the comparatively high temperature of its water during the cold season, it is generally alleged that there are metals lying in it.”

NOTES.

To the north of Rampur-Boalia, the present headquarters of Rājshāhī, and west of the Naugaon Sub-Division, on the west bank of the Atrai river, is situated—Manda, a considerable village and the headquarters of the thana of that name. About four miles south of it

is Kūsambā or Kūsambī, where the mosque which is not, however, the oldest mosque of the District, is situated.¹ It is to be regretted that these interesting archæological remains are at present in a very bad state of preservation. Only *three* out of *six* domes now remain, which are broken, and the *débris* from them cover the inner floor of the mosque. Fortunately the walls are still standing, but some of their stones have fallen or been removed by unscrupulous villagers. It appears that the base of the building was erected on a platform, supported by arches with passages underneath. Although jungle has grown, and the passages have thereby been blocked up, the entrance to the passages can still be seen. Though dilapidated, the mosque was entire till the terrible earthquake of 1897, when the top portions of the domes fell, killing two persons who had gone into the interior of the building, while the *ta'ziya* procession had assembled in the neighbourhood of the masjid. The *mimbar* can be reached by stone steps, though it is not very safe, at their present state, to do so.

The large area towards the back of the Masjid is covered with thick vegetation. It contains moats, smaller tanks, and the remains of two or three brick-built buildings for the use of Muhammadan nobles and officials.

The tale as to the origin of the Masjid, as heard by Mr. Carstairs, and still repeated by the villagers, I am loath to believe in its entirety. Gaur can easily be substituted for Murshidabad, as the latter city was not then founded. Revenue Collectors were often incarcerated till they had paid their dues or satisfied the authorities in other ways. There is nothing strange in this. Sonā Bibī, if that was her name, could not be the Begum: most probably she was one of her maid-servants. The fable may be thus modified:—The zamindar used to play on a flute. Being pleased with the music, Sonā Bibī begged the king to liberate him and allow her to be united with him in holy matrimony. As Sonā Bibī was a Musalman woman, and the zamindar a Hindu, the king could not allow such an interdicted alliance. The zamindar having adopted the safe course, the king allowed the couple to depart as husband and wife, having given them money enough from the Royal Treasury for their immediate needs, and a *Jāgīr* of Mauza Kusambī with 327 other villages in its neighbourhood for their future wants. It is impossible to suppose that the prisoner would have fared better if he was foolish enough to please one of the Royal ladies. No sovereign would put away a wife, because his wife desired it.

¹ I hear that there are other ruins of ancient tanks, tombs and temples as well as the traces of a city some six or seven miles from Bāgmārā thana in Rājshāhī. Two of the mosques are at Madariganj, and one at Namāz-gāon. The locality is called Mīrkāl.

From the inscription copied below, it will be observed that the Kusamba Mosque was built by Sulaimān in the reign of Sultān Ghiyāṣuddīn Abu-l-Muzaffar Bahādur Shāh, the son of Muḥammad Shāh Ghāzī of the family of Sūr Afghāns, in the Hijri year 966 A.H., corresponding to 1558-9 A.D., some thirty-five years after the Bagha Mosque. Sultān Ghiyāṣuddīn Bahādur Shāh reigned from A.H. 962 to 938 only. It appears that Sulaimān obtained his building-materials from ruined and unused Hindu temples, but showed great toleration in preserving those that were in good order or till then used.

Babu Jageswar Biswas, late Deputy Magistrate of Rājshāhī, who visited the Masjid on the 11th December 1901, saw that the stone containing the inscription about the foundation of the mosque had fallen down at the earthquake or later on, and that it was kept inclined against the wall of the middle-arched door of the mosque. In September, 1902, I learnt that it was removed by one Khudī Munshī of the village to his own house, and there it now rests.

I take this opportunity of suggesting that when steps are being taken to preserve the ruins of Gaur and Pauduah, it is worth while to repair this ancient and stone-built Masjid of the District, and preserve it from further dilapidation.

The following is the text of the inscription engraved in bold Tughrā character. It is in two lines, each line measuring 2 ft. $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $8\frac{3}{4}$ in.

(1) قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من بني لله مسجدا يبني به وجه الله بنى الله له
 فى الجنة مثله فى عهد السلطان المعظم المكرم غياث (2) الدنيا والدين ابوالمظفر بهادر
 شاه السلطان ابن محمد شاه غازي خاد الله ملكه و سلطانه واعلى امره و شانه و عز جنده
 و بوهانه بناكرده سليمان دام عدله فى سنة ست ستين تسعمائة

Translation:—

The Prophet, may God's blessings and favour be on him, has said, "He who maketh a mosque for God, desiring thereby God's honour, will have one like it built for him by God in paradise." In the time of the exalted and benevolent Sultān, Ghiyāṣu-d-Dunyā-wad-Dīn Abu-l-Muzaffar Bahādur Shāh, the Sultān, son of Muḥammad Shāh Ghāzī, (may God perpetuate his kingdom and his sovereignty, and exalt his command and dignity, and may his army and example be honoured!) constructed by Sulaimān, (may his justice be lasting!) in the year 966